

4475-26
2
The Practice of Religion and Virtue recom-
mended; especially in Times of Danger. *S*

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

In the Parish-Church of *Newbury*,

On Sunday, August 12, 1759.

Before the OFFICERS and MILITIA

Of the County of *Berks*.

By *THOMAS PENROSE*, A. M.
Rector of *Newbury*. *K*

Published at the Request of the OFFICERS.

L O N D O N.

Printed for J. NEWBERRY, at the Bible and Sun in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1759.

STATIONER & PRINTER
No. 1, N. 1st St. N. W.

THE
A

S E R M O N

PREACHED

In the Parish Church of Newbury

On Sunday, August 2nd, 1879.

Before the
Of the



By THOMAS PRIBROST, A. M.
Rector of Newbury.

Published at the Request of the Governors.

L O N D O N

Printed for J. Newbery, at the 'Star and Garter' in
St. Paul's Church-yard, 1879.



S E R M O N, &c.

DEUTERONOMY XXIII. 9.

*When the Host goeth forth against thine
Enemies, then keep thee from every
wicked Thing.*



VIRTUE and Religion
are so much and so con-
stantly the Duty of Man,
that there can be no Time
or Place in which they
may be safely omitted:
No Conjunctures can supersede their Ne-
cessity; no Emergency can vacate their
Obligation.

Obligation. They are so congenial to our Nature, and so essential to our Happiness, that when we omit or neglect the Observation of them, we do Violence to our Constitution, we desert our best Interest, and precipitate ourselves into Perplexity and Distress.

But though the Obligations of Virtue and Religion are at all Times worthy of our Attention, and can never be prudently or safely disregarded by us; yet there are certain Seasons when these Obligations carry a more peculiar Force, and when we should suffer them to operate with their whole Weight.

Thus, for Example, when Danger threatens, and Calamities seem impending; *That* is the Crisis, in which all our Sensibility, both for Ourselves and the Public, should be awakened: *That* is the Crisis, when Men should have instant Recourse to the Assistance of Virtue; and should provide themselves
with

with the Supports which true Piety and Religion will supply them with. Then it is that they should *watch and pray*; that they should purify their Hearts and Consciences from the Defilements of Sin; and, by the Practice of Truth and Holiness, should endeavour to recommend both themselves and their Country to the Protection of Almighty Power.

It was therefore with admirable Wisdom and Propriety, that *Moses* gave the *Israelites* the Precept of the Text; *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemies, then keep thee from every wicked Thing* :—" At the same Time that
 " thou preparest thy Weapons for War,
 " reform thy Life;—before thou en-
 " terest into the Battle, leave thy Sins
 " and thy Corruptions behind thee;—
 " endeavour to interest Heaven in thy
 " Defence by the Fervency of thy Pi-
 " ety;—and so secure to thyself the

Way

“ Way to Victory, by obtaining the Assistance of the *God of Hosts*.”

There is no Enthusiasm, my Brethren, there is no Superstition, in this Counsel; but it is at once the Dictate of sober Reason, and the Voice of Inspiration. Permit me therefore on *this* Occasion, and before *this* Audience, which we cannot behold but with a mixture of Pleasure and Gratitude, Permit me to lay before you the great Expediency of our complying with this Precept of the Text, *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemies, then keep thee from every wicked Thing.*

I am sensible how much it is become the Language of Men to talk of Chance and Contingence; of Accident, Fate, and Fortune; even on the most solemn Occasions: To these they are apt to impute Events of every Kind; and they are ready to resolve even Victory and Defeat, even the Rise
and

and Overthrow of Nations, into one or other of these Causes;---if Causes they may be called.

But was Reason or Scripture consulted, and were we governed by the Authority of their Decisions, they would inspire us with far other Sentiments; and would teach us to refer every Occurrence to the Will and Wisdom of a superintending God. They would direct us, in every Conjuncture, to ascribe all the Vicissitudes of Life to the Determinations of Providence; and to consider them as the Dispensations of that omnipotent Being, who governs the World. And therefore they send us, on every Occasion, to invoke his Assistance; to implore his Protection; to solicit his Mercy. Particularly, when Clouds arise, and a Tempest threatens; when Dangers approach us, and our Fears are alarmed; they then point out to us the instant Necessity of flying for Refuge to the Almighty Guardian

Guardian of the World ; and, by the Reformation of our Lives, endeavouring to secure an Asylum *under the Shadow of his Wings.*

And, my Brethren, unless we can interest this omnipotent Defender to protect and bless us, it will be but an unavailing Confidence to rely on our own Arm, and to trust in our own Bow. For it stands recorded in the sacred Law of Truth, *That except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.* Psalm. cxxvii. i. Human Vigilance and human strength, alas ! what are they when unbefriended from above ? And what becomes of our boasted security, when God Almighty hath not made fast the Bars of our Gates ?

If you place your Confidence in your own Sword, and flatter yourselves with Victory merely from a Superiority of Power ; yet consider, I beseech you,
how

how often *the Bows of the Mighty are broken*; that *the Race is not always to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong*; Neither is the mighty Man delivered by his much Strength.

There is, my Brethren, there is a Supreme Disposer of all Events, who *reigneth in the Kingdoms of Men*; who weigheth States and Communities in his eternal Balance; and who dispenseth their Fates and their Fortunes, their Prosperity and their Overthrow, according to the Purposes of his good Pleasure. Thus Job saith, with the greatest Truth and Solemnity, *That God increaseth the Nations and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations and straiteneth them again.* Job xii. 23. At his Frown the whole System of Nature trembles: All the Works of Creation stand ready to obey his Commands; and his Arm, though invisible to us, directs and guides every Occurrence in this lower World.

B

Hence

Hence it is, that the mightiest Preparations, when they have gone forth in the Pride of their own Strength and unblest of God, have returned ingloriously with Shame and Defeat: And hence it is, that an inferior Force, when God was with them, have spread their Conquests far and wide over the Pride and Ambition of stronger Nations, who were deserted of Heaven.

You see the Reason, then, for *keeping Ourselves from every wicked Thing, when the Host goeth forth against our Enemies*: That we may thereby obtain the Benefit and the Blessing of God's ever-watchful Eye; that our Armies may have that Success, which no Foresight, no Provision of our's can insure them; and that our Country may in due Time receive the happy Advantages of Peace.

And so agreeable is this Doctrine to the Reason of Man, that Nature ever
speaks

speaks the same Language, and suggests the same Practice. For the *Gentile* as well as the *Jew*, the *Heathen* as well as the *Christian*, ever had Recourse to propitiatory Rites, to Sacrifices and Prayers, in Time of public Danger: At such Seasons the Temples were crouded; the Altars were loaded; and Heaven was invoked both in national and private Assemblies.

It is by the practice of Holiness, Virtue, and Goodness, that the Meanest, as well as the Mightiest, can add something to the Happiness of his Country: And he that can handle neither Sword nor Spear in its Defence, can yet contribute to its Preservation and Prosperity by the Purity of his Life and the Fervency of his Prayers.

We have heard, indeed, a very different Doctrine advanced by the Disputants of the Age; “ That states and King-

“ doms owe their Advancement and

“ their Fall to mere natural Causes,
 “ without any Providential Interpositi-
 “ ons: That they grow up and de-
 “ cay; that they have their Period of
 “ Maturity, and then hasten to their Dis-
 “ solution, like the human Body.”

But if you consult the History of Man-
 kind, you will find almost invariably,
 that the Mutations and Revolutions in
 States and Kingdoms, are strongly marked
 and characterized by the Degrees of Good
 and Evil prevalent in them, at their se-
 veral Periods. Thus, in the Ascent to
 Power and Strength, you generally dis-
 cover much Simplicity, Innocence, and
 Purity of Manners; a Care of Religion
 and its Offices; Moderation in Pleasures;
 Parsimony in Expences; industrious Di-
 ligence; and a solemn Regard both to
 public and private Faith: And these
 are the Virtues for which God is gra-
 cious to a Land, and *blesseth the Increase*
of it.

But

But when Nations are corrupted by Luxury; when the Love and Fear of God are lost among them; when Religion, Truth, and Justice, are fallen to Decay; and Impiety, Perfidiousness, and Sensuality every where prevail; their Vices then arm Heaven for their Destruction: They wither away before the Divine Vengeance; and are either given up to the Sword for utter Excision, or are doomed to live the wretched Tributaries of some powerful Conqueror, and to groan under the Loss of that Liberty which they wantonly abused.

The true Doctrine therefore is, *That Righteousness exalteth a Nation*; Proverbs, xiv. 34. that Goodness is the certain Foundation of public Happiness and Glory: *But Sin is a Reproach to any People*; a general Departure from Virtue is immediately succeeded by a Declension of Power, and by a Decay of Greatness.

And

And if this be Fact, as both Reason and Experience, together with the Scriptures, declare it to be; it not only justifies, but even urges and enforces the Application now made to you. For if *We* would be a great and a flourishing People, we must first *fear God and keep his Commandments*; we must acquire and preserve a just Sense of our Duty to our Maker; and must secure the Superintendence of his Arm by the Sincerity of our Reformation, and the Goodness of our Lives. There must be a public Love and a public Observation of Justice, Fidelity, Truth, and Modesty; there must be a conscientious Regard to our Duty both to God and Man, if we would be happy in the Enjoyment of our civil and religious Liberties, those dearest and best of all earthly Blessings! and if we would convey them down in their due Perfection to our Posterity.

Can

Can I intreat you then by any weightier Motive than what I now use? Can I lay before you any stronger Reasons for an immediate Amendment of Life? When I plead with you the Cause of Virtue, I mean to plead the Cause of your Country: And when I exhort you to the instant Practice of Righteousness and Godliness, 'tis from a most sincere Desire that *You* should be some of the happy Instruments of deriving a Blessing upon the Nation.

It is not from the gloomy Forebodings of Fear, it is not from any melancholy Apprehensions of Disaster, that I press these Things upon you; for though *the Enemy exalteth himself, and they that are mighty rage horribly; yet our God who dwelleth on high is mightier. To him we have committed our Cause:* And from Him we have received many recent Instances of a kind Providence to this favoured Land. We have lately, very lately

lately, seen the Designs of Ambition defeated ; and the Enterprizes of Tyranny overthrown : We have carried Victory to distant Climates ; and have spread both the Glory and the Terror of our Arms in many remote Regions of the Earth.

But though we have checked the Progress, yet we have not extinguished the Lust of Power in our Enemies : For, enraged by our Success, and embittered by our Victories, they are meditating an Irruption into our Borders ; and are preparing to bring upon us the Miseries of War, the Horrors of Devastation, and the total Subversion of our happy Constitution.

To frustrate this Malice, to repel these Invaders, and to secure the Blessings which Heaven hath granted us, 'tis with Pleasure, 'tis with Gratitude, that we see the Wisdom and Spirit of the Nation so seasonably, so nobly exerted :

A fair

A fair Instance of which we have *now* before us.

From this Wisdom and this Spirit, especially if sanctified by our Piety, and recommended by our Virtue to the Divine Blessing, what may we not hope for in the just Defence of our Religion and Liberties against the Encroachments of Perfidy, and the Invasions of Violence?

We have often checked the Vanity, and reduced the Power of this aspiring Enemy: Various are the Testimonies of our Superiority; various are the Monuments of our Triumphs: And if we now *keep ourselves from every wicked Thing*, if we reform our Lives, and *become a People zealous of good Works*; we may upon the best Grounds hope, that we shall add new Victories to the Trophies acquired by our Ancestors, and that Posterity will read the Annals of this Age with Admiration and Gratitude.

In this Confidence, and with the warmest Wishes for the Happiness of my Country, suffer me to address myself to *You*, my Brethren, who have taken Arms for its Defence, and are now a Part of that *Host which is going forth to oppose the Designs of our Enemies*. To *You* my Intreaties are particularly directed; with all the Deference that is due to *Your* Station, and with all the Earnestness that becomes *mine*. Let me beseech you to consider, that a Love for God and Religion, together with Temperance, and Sobriety, are the fairest Ornaments in a human Character; and that a good Man and a good Christian cannot be either a bad Soldier or a bad Patriot.

As you have undertaken the Cause of Liberty; let not that Liberty degenerate into Licentiousness: And as you are entrusted with the Defence of our holy Religion; let the Power, the Spirit, and the Fruits

Fruits of that Religion be visible in your Lives and Conversations.

Among the Ancients you find, that the Access to the Temple of Honour was through the Temple of Virtue: Among Christians, the Paths of Virtue and Godliness lead to a nobler End; they are the sure Avenues to a more illustrious Station; they lead to true and immortal Glory in Heaven. Be it therefore *your* Care, my dear Brethren, to cultivate among you the Graces of the Gospel, and all good Morality: Be it your Care to add Piety to your Loyalty; and to *fear God*, while you *honour the King*.

And let me be permitted to remind you, that the best Success will ever attend those who are the best *Soldiers of Jesus Christ*. For what can we hope for from a Course of Immorality, Ebriety, and Vice, but Timidity in Action and an unmanly Depression of Spirits? *The Wicked flee when no Man pursueth*: Cowardice

and Pusillanimity are the natural Effects of Profaneness and Sin: And they, who wantonly blaspheme their God in the Hours of Safety, are usually confounded and dismayed in the Day of Battle. Whereas a good Life inspires Men with Courage, with Resolution, with Intrepidity; and *the Armour of Righteousness* is like an invincible Shield in the Season of Danger: Those who, with the Apostle, are *careful to live in all good Conscience before God*, those who are habitually temperate, virtuous, and pious, are prepared for all Events; to suffer or to triumph, to conquer or to die: The Hopes of the Christian overcome the Fears of the Man; and the Dread of Death is greatly lessened by the Expectation of the Crown of Glory

Let me beseech you then, in the Spirit of Love, to acquire and exemplify a manly Sobriety, Chastity, and Temperance; Carry with you a constant Regard for Virtue; a constant Love and Affec-
tion

tion for good Morality and Christian Piety : Carry with you the Fear of God, and a Reverence for his sacred Name. Put away from among you every wicked, every unholy Thing : Particularly, refrain from the impious Practice of Blaspheming, and Cursing, and violating the holy Sabbath. And amidst the Discipline which your present Profession requires, remember, I intreat you, that you are still Men and Christians.

Wherefore, to conclude all in the Words of *Saul* to *David*, when he had expressed his Desire to meet the *Philistine*;---*Go, and the Lord your God be with You!*

F I N I S.

tion for good Morality and Christian
ity: Carry with you the Fear of God,
and a Reverence for his sacred Name.
Put away from among you every wicked,
every unwholesome Thing: Forbearance
restrain from the various Passions of
Whispering and Gossiping and visiting
the holy Sabbath. And amidst the Dis-
turbances which your present Position re-
quires, remember, I beseech you, that you
are still Men and Christians.

Whence, we conclude all in the
Name of God to Depart when he has
expressed his Will in the Holy
Scriptures, and the Lord your God be with
you.

6 AP 58

F I V I 2